

# City of San Antonio



## Minutes Community Health Committee

2023 – 2025 Council Members

Chair: Teri Castillo, Dist. 5

Dr. Sukh Kaur, Dist. 1 | Phyllis Viagran, Dist. 3

Dr. Adriana Rocha Garcia, Dist. 4 | Marina Alderete Gavito, Dist. 7

Wednesday, January 24, 2024

10:00 AM

City Hall

The Community Health Committee convened a regular meeting in the City Hall Council Briefing Room beginning at 10:00 AM. City Clerk Debbie Racca-Sittre took the Roll Call noting a quorum with the following Committee Members present:

**Members Present:** Teri Castillo, *Chair*  
Dr. Sukh Kaur, *Member*  
Phyllis Viagran, *Member*  
Dr. Adriana Rocha Garcia, *Member*  
Marina Alderete Gavito, *Member*

**Members Absent:** None

### Approval of Minutes

#### 1. Approval of minutes from the Community Health Committee meeting on Monday, December 4, 2023.

Councilmember Rocha Garcia moved to Approve the minutes of the December 4, 2023 Community Health Committee meeting. Councilmember Viagran seconded the motion. The motion carried by the following vote:

**Aye:** Castillo, Viagran, Rocha Garcia

**Absent:** Kaur, Alderete Gavito

### Public Comments

Jack Finger spoke in opposition to Item 3.

Tara Karns-Wright with Be Well Texas, UT Health San Antonio spoke in support of Item 2.

Anel Flores and Victoria Escheverri, members of the Mayor's LGBTQ+ Advisory Committee spoke in support of Item 3.

Maria Cesar spoke in support of Item 3.

## **Briefing and Possible Action on**

### **2. Council Consideration Request by Councilmember Teri Castillo (District 5) on Opioid-Related Overdoses and Access to Narcan.** [María Villagómez, Deputy City Manager; Claude A. Jacob, Director, Health]

Dr. Claude Jacob, Director of Metro Health, introduced Chief Mental Health Officer Jessie Higgins who provided an overview of the Council Consideration Request (CCR) including data regarding substance use and overdose in San Antonio which had increased significantly since 1999 with a 27% increase from 2019 to 2022.

Higgins reported that the City, Bexar County, and the State of Texas had joined lawsuits against opioid manufacturers and distributors. She noted that settlements to date included pharmacy chains, opioid manufacturers, distributors and more. Higgins stated that the State of Texas had secured more than \$1.6 billion in opioid settlement funds, up to 15% of which was expected to be passed through to local governments.

The City of San Antonio expected to receive \$6,072,227.37 as its share of an opioid litigation settlement, to be paid out over 18 years, according to Higgins. She stated that to date, the City received \$1.4 million and she recommended using these funds through a policy framework related to prevention, harm reduction, treatment and recovery. She reported that prevention would include: safe prescriptions, safe drug disposal and school/family based prevention. She reported that Harm Reduction would include: capacity building, collective impact and training for law enforcement and prosecutors. She indicated that Treatment would include: data sharing, consultation networks, mobile medication assisted treatment and promotion of continuity of care. She added that Recover would include: peer support specialists, supplemental funding and addressing stigma.

Higgins stated that ongoing efforts included establishment of a dedicated fund to supplement rather than supplant existing funding and allocation of funds for an external evaluator to promote a data driven response. She reported that staff recommended funding for Metro Health Substance Use Outreach and Engagement Guidelines Initiative, community facing harm reduction and treatment efforts and medication assisted treatment for those connected by Department of Human Services' outreach workers. She added that the plan was expected to be presented at "B" Session to the City Council as a part of the FY 2024 3+9 Financial Report in February 2024 with a report back to the Community Health Committee in May 2024.

## **DISCUSSION:**

Chair Castillo spoke in support of the CCR and the staff's recommended framework and plan for use of the Opioid settlement funds but also requested additional funding to continue the work beyond the settlement funding.

Councilmember Alderete Gavito spoke in support of the CCR and the staff recommendation but asked if there were already services for pregnant women experiencing addiction and requested statistics on the number of babies born annually with an addiction, and overdose deaths of pregnant individuals or individuals with children. Higgins stated that there were existing programs in the community which were not funded by the City.

Councilmember Alderete Gavito noted that Metro Health and the San Antonio Fire Department distributed NARCAN but asked who else might distribute. Higgins stated that other public facing departments could get access and training to use NARCAN, but non-profits could also apply. Councilmember Alderete Gavito recommended more education, suggested a focus on detox and requested information on the detox success rate. Higgins noted that the Center for Health Care Services (CHCS) provided free and low cost detox but there might be other factors such as housing that prevented success.

Councilmember Alderete Gavito requested information about Bexar County's program. Higgins stated that Bexar County was currently releasing American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Funding which had a quicker deadline but they would get to the settlement funds after the ARPA funding was spent.

Councilmember Rocha Garcia commented that her team had learned how to use NARCAN to save lives and how to identify the signs of a fentanyl overdose and thanked the San Antonio Council on Alcohol and Drug Abuse (SACADA) for providing the training. She recommended training all council staff, college students or other members of the public.

Councilmember Rocha Garcia requested data on opioid related overdoses by City Council District and response rates for Emergency Medical Services (EMS) specific to opioid overdoses, noting that the closure of the hospital on the south side was detrimental to the health of that community. She recommended more accessibility of public places that could administer NARCAN.

Councilmember Kaur asked how Bexar County decided how their funding would be disbursed. Higgins stated that Bexar County had more authority related to mental health and had a vested interest in providing help because of the impact on the jails and court systems; they spent their funds on outreach, staffing and the non-profit Crosspoint which was a program for women.

Councilmember Kaur clarified that Higgins had recommended uses for the City's \$1.4 million but asked about future funding. Higgins stated that the current amount was \$1.4 million but each of the 18 years would yield about \$300,000. Higgins also noted that a model was being created to work with community partners.

Councilmember Viagran requested a timeline for when the full City Council would hear the framework plan and a timeline for the funding and outreach plan. Higgins stated that the plan would be included in the FY 2024 3+9 Financial Report to City Council at a B Session in February 2024. Councilmember Viagran recommended continued promotion of the success of the

program at the State level so that they could provide additional funding. Councilmember Viagran supported breaking the stigma of drug abuse so that people could get help.

Chair Castillo mentioned there was an urgent need to partner with Bexar County and recommended reviewing peer cities' programs such as Austin/Travis County's campus. She thanked everyone for their input and noted that the Item was for briefing only as it was already scheduled to go to a City Council "B" Session for a briefing.

**3. Briefing on the establishment of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer + (LGBTQ+) Advisory Board.** [Dr. Jennifer Mata, Director, Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Accessibility Department]

Dr. Jennifer Mata, Director of the Department of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) introduced the Item and Samantha Smith, DEIA Civil Rights Manager, who presented a proposal to formalize the current Mayoral ad-hoc LGBTQ+ Advisory Committee into a City Commission.

Smith proposed a 13 member board comprised of one member that represented each City Council District and three Mayoral representatives. She noted that members should reflect the challenges and concerns of the LGBTQ+ community, encourage broad and diverse membership and include members reflective of and sensitive to the needs of LGBTQ+ communities across the City. She added that the Chair and Vice-Chair would be elected by the Committee and would follow the guidelines of the City Charter.

Smith reported that the board would be advisory to the City Council and City, and would recommend measures to improve life for LGBTQ+ San Antonians, coordinate and participate in educational programs, work with other commissions to address intersectionality and create, guide and support initiatives. Smith closed her presentation with a list of historic events and other policies and initiatives championed by the Ad Hoc Advisory Committee. Smith requested that the Committee take action to move the recommendation forward to the full City Council for consideration.

**DISCUSSION:**

Chair Castillo recognized Maria Salazar and invited her to speak in support of the creation of the LGBTQ+ Advisory Commission to ensure that there was a formal voice for the community and to provide access to elected officials. Salazar provided information related to a 2019 survey that identified needs for housing, health and law enforcement.

Naomi Brown, therapist/minister and director of clinical services for SA Pride Center provided information on the work of the Center and spoke in support of the Item.

Chair Castillo thanked the DEIA team and the Mayor for moving the Item forward and offered her support.

Councilmember Rocha Garcia thanked the staff and the Committee for their work as well as the advocacy by the members of the public that spoke in support of the Item. Councilmember Rocha Garcia asked how many other cities that had a similar committee. Smith stated that there were some

other cities which had a similar committee in Texas such as Austin.

Councilmember Rocha Garcia recognized that this was a first step in advocating against unjust treatment of people.

Councilmember Kaur supported creating a permanent Commission and asked if there was a further breakdown of recommendation for diversity on the Commission. Smith cautioned that specific numbers and titles were specifically not spelled out to make it more evergreen. Councilmember Kaur asked the City Clerk if the current board application had questions regarding the LGBTQ+ status of applicants. City Clerk Debbie Racca-Sittre stated that the current board application asked if an applicant was a “sexual minority.” Councilmember Kaur recommended an update to the language in the application. Councilmember Kaur suggested coordination and advocacy for work throughout the community and not just the City.

Councilmember Alderete Gavito thanked Salazar for identifying the three issues and expressed support for formalizing the Commission.

Councilmember Viagran requested clarification on the process of board member appointments, noting that the questions in the application allowed applicants to tell their story and what they would bring to the commission. Councilmember Viagran mentioned that the issues for this Commission to take on might change over time so it was good to be flexible in the composition.

Councilmember Viagran moved to recommend and forward the Item to the full City Council for consideration. Councilmember Rocha Garcia seconded the motion. The motion carried by the following vote:

**Aye:** Castillo, Kaur, Viagran, Rocha Garcia, Alderete Gavito

**4. Briefing on the status of the San Antonio-New Braunfels MSA US EPA Climate Pollution Reduction Grant (CPRG)** [Douglas Melnick, Chief Sustainability Officer, Office of Sustainability]

Julia Murphy, Assistant Chief Sustainability Officer, provided background on the SA Climate Ready Plan and the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Climate Pollution Reduction Grant (CPRG) that was a part of the Federal Inflation Reduction Act. She noted that Phase 1 included \$1 million in planning grants to develop a Priority Climate Action Plan (PCAP). She indicated that Phase 2 included \$4.6 billion in competitive grant funding for entities with implementable strategies included in their PCAPs with applications due April 1, 2024.

Murphy stated that the department was using its \$1 million grant to update its Climate Ready Plan and develop a PCAP in collaboration with the Alamo Area Council of Governments (AACOG) for the eight-county region. Murphy outlined the Climate Pollution Reduction Grants (CPRG) deliverables and key dates. She noted that the Regional Priority Climate Action Plan (PCAP) due March 1, 2024 was required to include a regional Greenhouse Gas (GHG) inventory, priority quantified GHG reduction measures, low-income and disadvantaged community benefits analysis and would serve as the foundation for CPRG Implementation Grants. She indicated that the Regional Comprehensive Climate Action Plan (CCAP) was due in August 2025 and needed to include a regional GHG inventory, GHG emissions projections, GHG reduction targets,

low-income and disadvantaged community benefits analysis, a plan to leverage Federal funding and a workforce planning analysis. Murphy stated that the SA Climate Ready Plan (CAAP) update was due in August 2025 would assess CAAP implementation status, update municipal and community GHG reduction targets and identify priority municipal and community strategies based on impact and funding opportunities. Murphy closed her presentation by providing an outreach and community engagement plan which included a community survey.

## DISCUSSION:

Chair Castillo noted there were strict parameters set by the EPA and thanked staff for being diligent in ensuring that the grant requirements were met.

Councilmember Viagran announced the Council District 3 Symposium which included a plan to distribute the sustainability survey.

Councilmember Alderete Gavito asked what was the largest contributor to GHG. Murphy stated that buildings and transportation were large emissions producers but the City of San Antonio had made progress on its buildings energy efficient measures such as changing out lights or HVAC systems. Councilmember Alderete Gavito asked how much had been saved. Golda OBenzu stated that since 2010, a 20% reduction was observed from baseline as a result of the retrofitting of buildings and new green building standards.

Councilmember Alderete Gavito asked why residential and commercial emissions had increased. Murphy stated that the growth of the City had cause increased emissions overall, but per capita it was lower. Councilmember Alderete Gavito stated that community engagement started with a survey and she offered to help distribute them.

Councilmember Rocha Garcia commented that both she and Councilmember Alderete Gavito sat on the AACOG Board and would advocate for this plan. Councilmember Rocha Garcia asked which was the most ambitious plan to reduce GHG. Murphy stated that moving to more renewables and away from fossil fuels was the most ambitious but also the most challenging; as well as mitigating the heat island effect and supporting the recycle economy.

Councilmember Rocha Garcia asked exactly how much needed to be reduced in order to meet the goals. Murphy referred to the chart that showed a flattening of progress since 2019 which was a challenge. Councilmember Rocha Garcia suggested empowering residents to participate and for community based organizations to host their own meetings. Councilmember Rocha Garcia also recommended including persons that spoke primarily Spanish and a focus on disadvantaged areas with poor air quality.

Councilmember Kaur supported the City leading by example by adding solar and moving toward Electric Vehicles (EV)s. Murphy stated that the Building and Equipment Services Department (BESD) was exploring opportunities as EV technology was evolving. Councilmember Kaur recommended making a business case for more EVs and other renewables for the City of San Antonio. Councilmember Kaur noted there was grant money available for school districts to convert to EV school buses.

Councilmember Kaur requested additional information about the development community noting there were many resources which could all be included in the plan. Murphy stated that it was important to get the word out and thanked the City Council for their help.

Item was for briefing only so no action was taken.

### **Adjournment**

There being no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 11:40 a.m.

**Approved**

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*Teri Castillo, Chair*

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*Debbie Racca-Sittre, City Clerk*